

Holmes, Debi

From: Ross, Steven
Sent: Thursday, February 08, 2007 4:04 PM
To: Holmes, Debi
Subject: FW: FEMA Levee Certification SD 1

-----Original Message-----

From: Ross, Steven
Sent: Thursday, February 08, 2007 3:57 PM
To: 'ngarcia@bos.lacounty.gov'; 'nenglund@bos.lacounty.gov'
Cc: Pestrella, Mark; Lafferty, Dan; Grant, Terri
Subject: FEMA Levee Certification SD 1

Norma & Nicole:

You may have heard about FEMA requesting that all agencies owning levees have them certified before the Flood Insurance Rate Maps are published in 2009. Many of Public Works channels are considered levees, and would need to be certified. If levees are not certified by FEMA's schedule, FEMA will redraw the Flood Insurance Rate Maps with new boundaries encompassing a presumed failed levee flood area, resulting in property owners with Federally-backed mortgages having to purchase flood insurance. We don't have an exact list yet, but in Supervisor Molina's District, the main levees would be on the Los Angeles and San Gabriel Rivers.

FEMA will shortly send Chairman Yaroslavsky and the mayors of all 88 cities in Los Angeles County a letter detailing the certification requirements and timelines. Before this letter is sent, we are proposing to send a letter to each city's Director of Public Works or City Engineer as an advance courtesy and discussing what Public Works is doing to certify our levees, and what FEMA may be asking of cities with levees. We are actively coordinating our levee certification efforts with the Corps of Engineers. Also, because the lower San Gabriel River and portions of Coyote Creek levees affect Orange County, we are coordinating with the appropriate Orange County agencies.

Attached is a fact sheet on levee certification. If you have any questions, please call me at (626) 458-4316. Thanks.



LEVEE
CERTIFICATION Q and

FEMA LEVEE CERTIFICATION Q and A

What

FEMA, through the National Flood Insurance Program, is encouraging all levee owners and operators to get their levees certified as meeting the one percent chance of flooding (100-year flood).

Why

In the aftermath of recent disasters such as hurricane Katrina in 2005, FEMA has embarked on a nation-wide program to certify the country's levees. FEMA has tied this effort to their Digital Flood Insurance Rate Maps modernization program.

Who is Responsible for Levee Certification?

Owners and operators of levees.

Is there Federal help available?

Generally, not at this time. FEMA has no authority to provide funds, and the Corps of Engineers presently has very limited budget to certify their own facilities.

When does the Certification need to be completed?

FEMA will send levee owners a letter informing them that they have 90 days to enter an agreement to have their levees Provisionally Accredited if the owners reasonably believe their levees can be certified and can provide FEMA with an adopted Operations and Maintenance plan. Levee owners will then have 24 months to complete the certification process. DPW has not yet received this letter, however we expect to receive it by May 2007.

What happens if levee owners don't certify or receive Provisionally Accredited status?

FEMA will consider the levee as ineffective to provide flood protection and delineate flood inundation zones on the new Digital Flood Insurance Rate Maps. This will require owners with Federally backed mortgages to purchase flood insurance until the levee is certified.

Where and how many residents in Los Angeles County could this affect?

Mostly in the Los Angeles basin along the Los Angeles River, San Gabriel River, Coyote Creek, and lower Ballona Creek. Portions of the Santa Clara River and some areas in the Antelope Valley may also be affected. The current estimate is about 2.8 million residents could be affected by having to pay millions extra in flood insurance every year until the levee is certified.

What is the Los Angeles County Department of Public Works doing about levee certification?

DPW is working closely with FEMA, the Corps, and affected cities to complete the certification process of DPW's facilities within FEMA's timeframe. Currently, we estimate the deadline to be May 2009.

Besides Los Angeles County Department of Public Works and the Corps of Engineers, what other cities or Counties may be affected by Levee Certification?

DPW and the Corps of Engineers have the majority of the open channels with levees within the County. Our facilities traverse many cities within the County. DPW will certify its facilities and the Corps will certify their facilities. Generally, most other cities probably won't have qualifying facilities, but each city or levee owner is responsible to certify their own qualifying facilities under the FEMA program. The cities of Los Angeles, Santa Clarita, Lancaster, and Palmdale are more likely to have levees needing certification. Other agencies such as Caltrans, the Department of Water Resources, and Railroads may have levees needing certification.

The lower San Gabriel River and Coyote Creek border Orange County, and certification issues will affect their residents and businesses. L.A. DPW is working with Orange County to coordinate Levee Certification efforts.

Is Levee Certification mandatory or voluntary?

Levee Certification is voluntary in the same way that participation in the National Flood Insurance Program is voluntary. FEMA can not force levee owners to certify their levees.